THE END
MARVEL PG
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AL MILGROM

THE END

MARVEL

PREVIOUSLY...

AKHENATEN

THANOS

DR. DOOM

THOR

ZEUS

SILVER SURFER

DR. STRANGE

NAMOR

HULK

CAPTAIN MARVEL

The Fantastic Four, the Avengers, and the X-Men have all been killed...

...murdered by the seemingly-omnipotent Pharaoh Akhenaten, who has returned to conquer Earth and the surrounding star systems as the appointed representative of a mysterious organization known only as the Celestial Order.

Thor of Asgard and Zeus of fabled Olympus have joined forces to put an end to Akhenaten's dark plans, but realize even they do not possess the might needed for the task.

Meanwhile, the mad titan Thanos has recruited Doctor Strange, Namor, the Hulk, Captain Marvel and the Silver Surfer to his covert war against Akhenaten.

And unbeknownst to the dark pharaoh, the nefarious Doctor Doom has secreted a spy camera within Akhenaten's royal palace...

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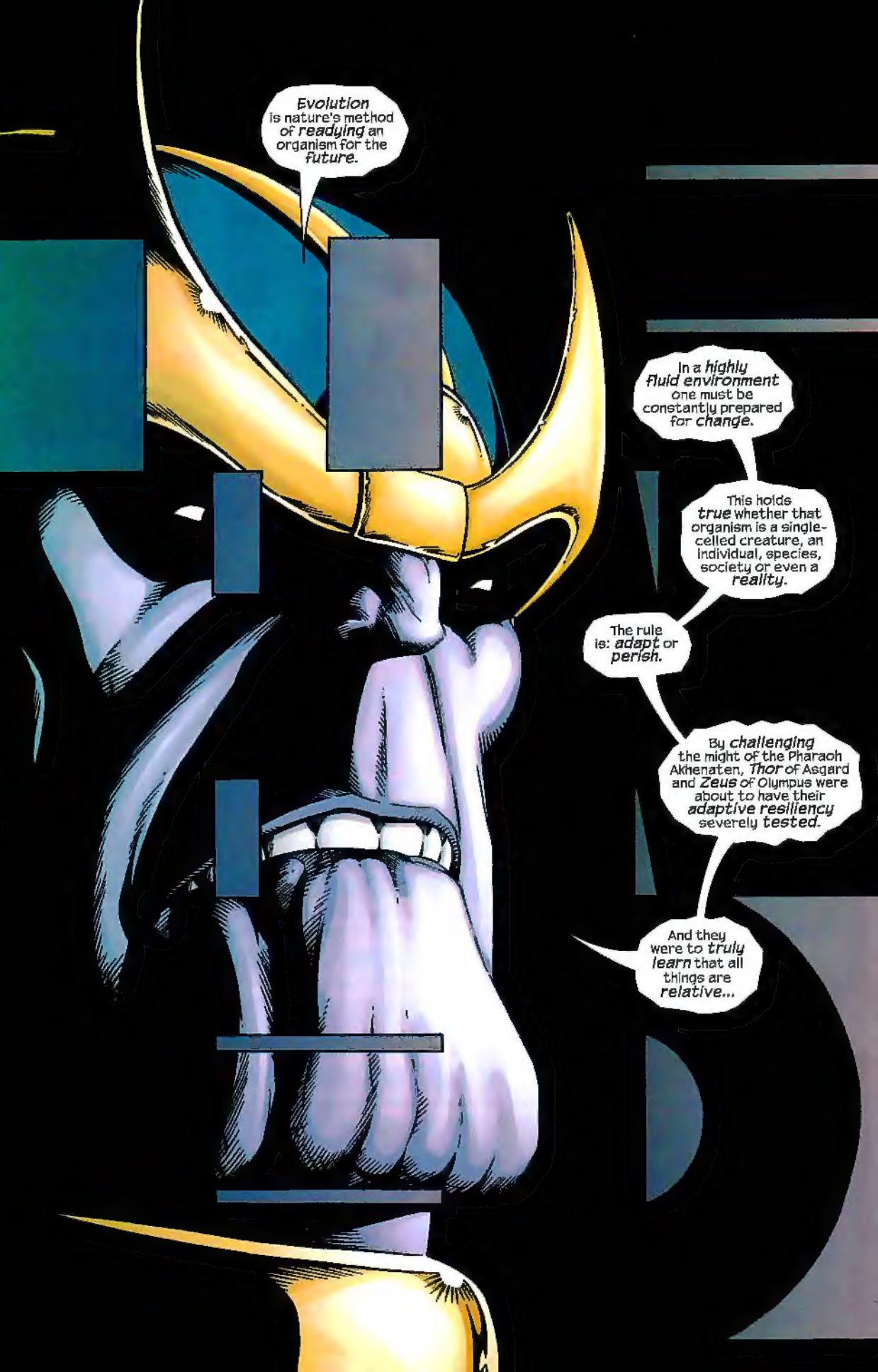
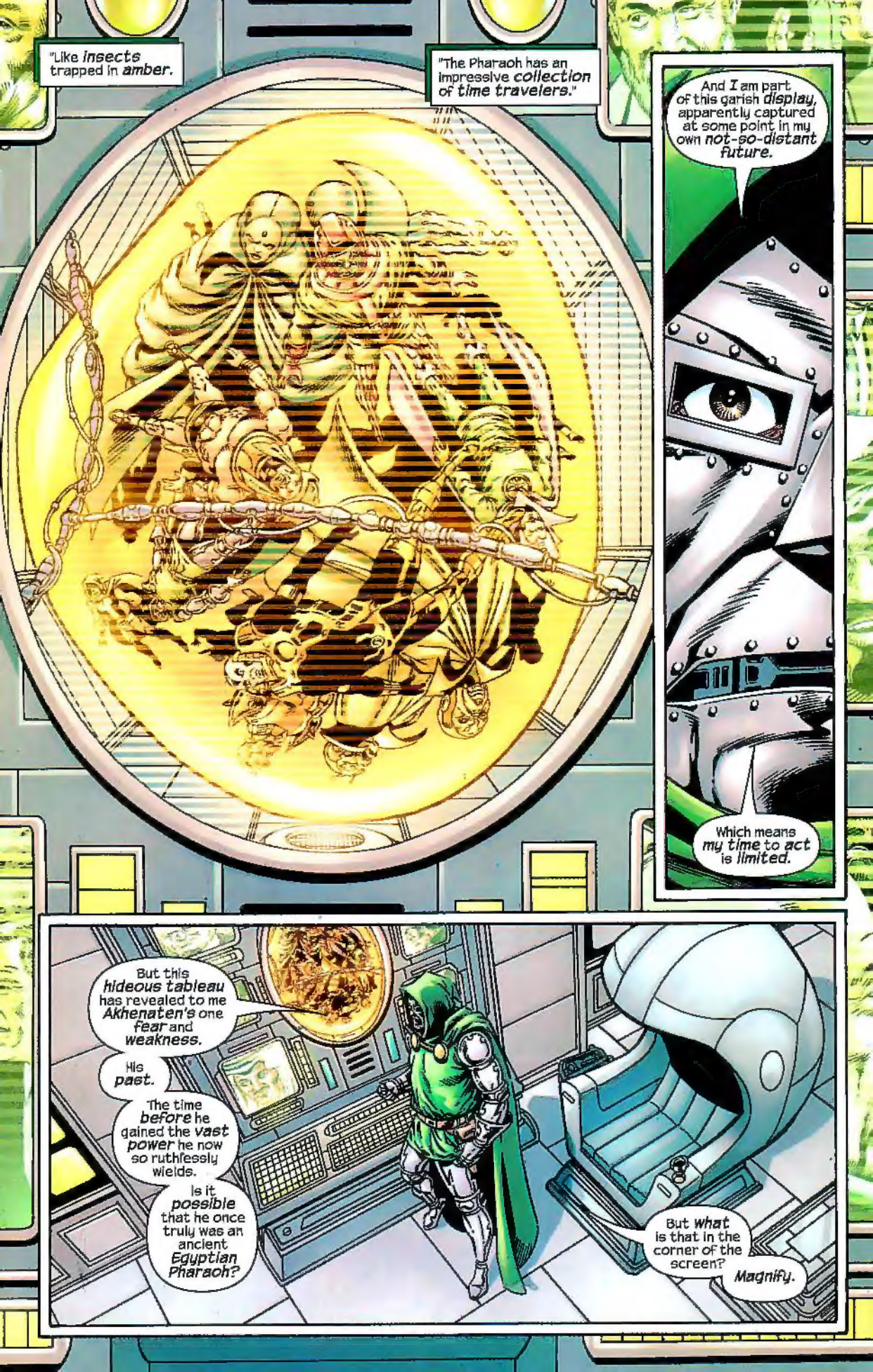
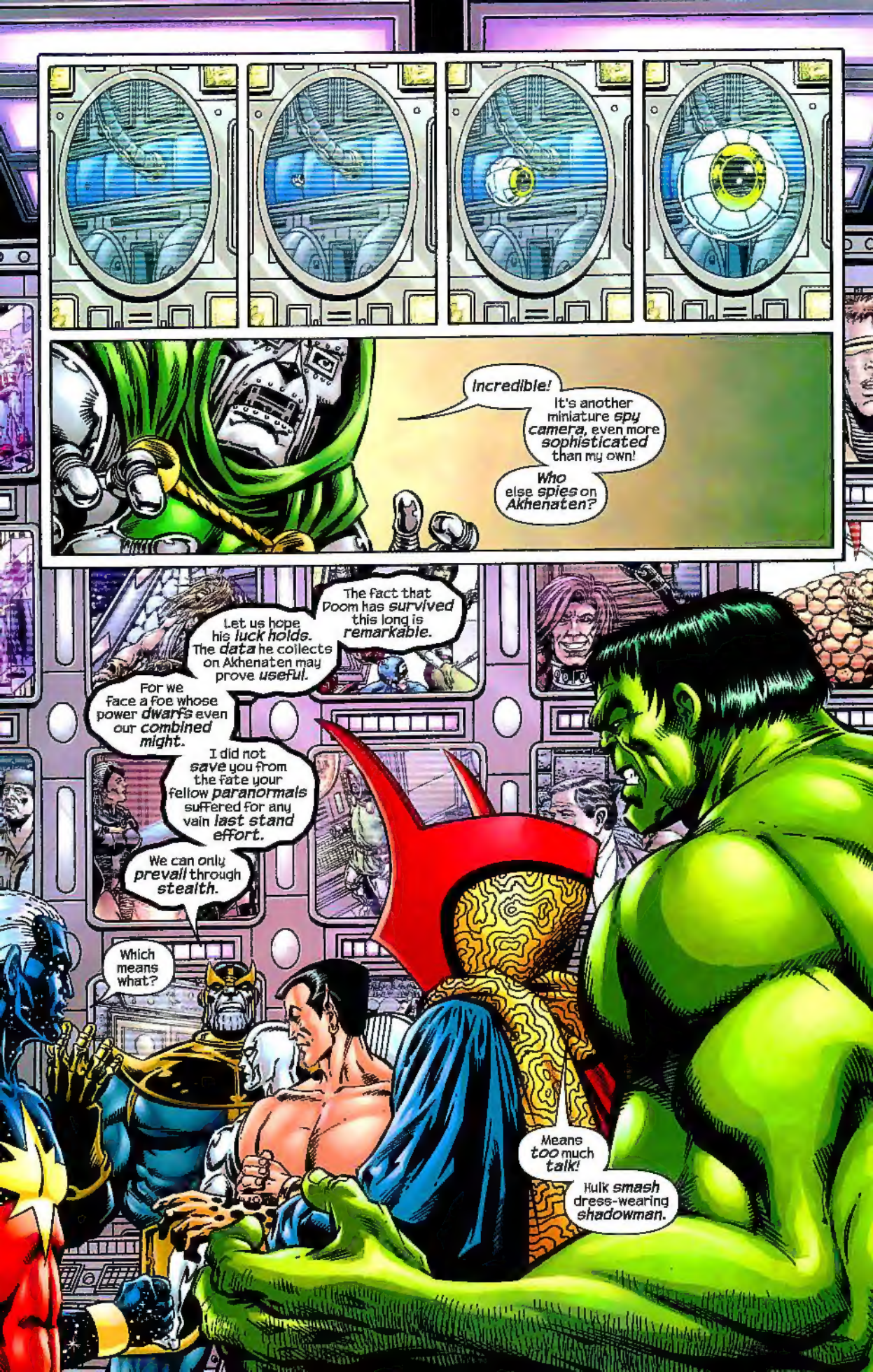

Evolution is nature's method of readying an organism for the future.
In a highly fluid environment one must be constantly prepared for change.
This holds true whether that organism is a single-celled creature, an individual, species, society or even a reality.
The rule is: adapt or perish.
By challenging the might of the Pharaoh Akhenaten, Thor of Asgard and Zeus of Olympus were about to have their adaptive resiliency severely tested.
And they were to truly learn that all things are relative...

Even the power of the gods.
What be this place, noble Zeus?
Neutral territory, Thor.
A rendezvous point for gods and monarchs.
A locale where differing beliefs matter not.
Here we shall find the aid we so desperately seek.
Will they truly answer your summons?
'Tis also their universe that be imperiled.
Meanwhile the good Doctor Doom was also having his universe badly shaken.
Exploring Akhenaten's palace is like a journey through madness.
So many indecipherable technologies...
Now this!


"Like insects trapped in amber.
"The Pharaoh has an impressive collection of time travelers."
And I am part of this garish display, apparently captured at some point in my own not-so-distant future.
Which means my time to act is limited.
But this hideous tableau has revealed to me Akhenaten's one fear and weakness.
His past.
The time before he gained the vast power he now so ruthlessly wields.
Is it possible that he once truly was an ancient Egyptian Pharaoh?
But what is that in the corner of the screen?
Magnify.


Incredible!
It's another miniature spy camera, even more sophisticated than my own!
Who else spies on Akhenaten?
The fact that Doom has survived this long is remarkable.
Let us hope his luck holds. The data he collects on Akhenaten may prove useful.
For we face a foe whose power dwarfs even our combined might.
I did not save you from the fate your fellow paranormals suffered for any vain last stand effort.
We can only prevail through stealth.
Which means what?
Means too much talk!
Hulk smash dress-wearing shadowman.

That ill-conceived plan will merely get you killed, Hulk.
You say Hulk dies!
Maybe Hulk smash pointy shoulders!
He's not threatening you, Hulk.
Is he always like this, Namor?
Marvel, this is one of his better days.
Strange, leash your dog.
Or I will.
When facing overwhelming odds in battle, one need change the equation.
A powerful foe's resources must be diminished before confrontation.
Any other course of action is simply suicidal.
Odd counsel coming from a supposed nihilist.
A former nihilist, Captain. One who has seen the light and moved on.
Then our plan is...?
Quite simple, really.
We determine the source of Akhenaten's vast might...
And we deprive him of it.
And within a distant actuality, another war council convened.
A gathering of Gods.
My fellow astral regents, I welcome you.

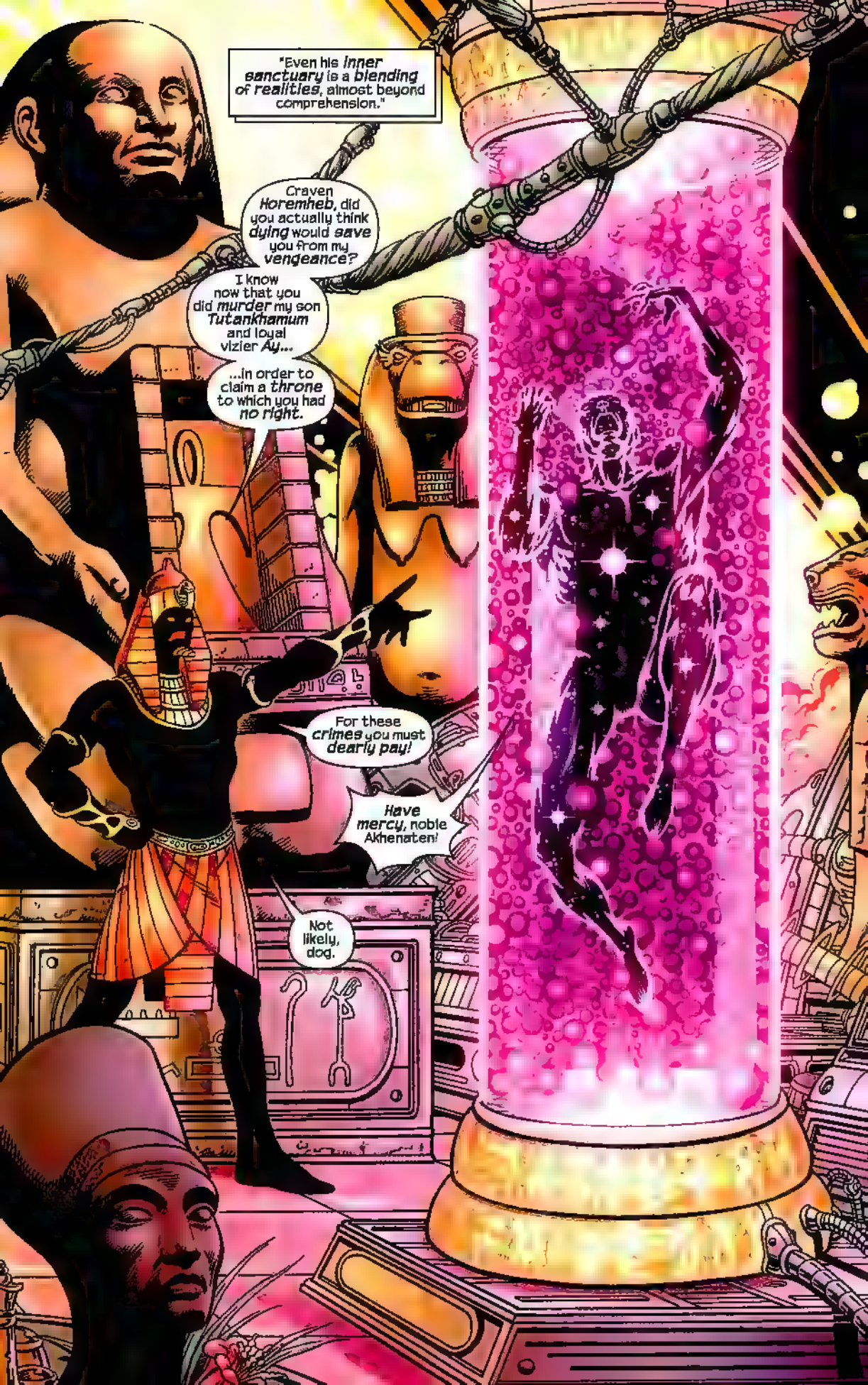
The monarchs of so-called mythological lands.
There was Izanagi of Onokoro.
Vishnu from Nirvana.
Naqsh-I-rustem's Atar.
Horus of the Ennead.
The Mayan God Hunab Ku.
Shou-hsing from the Court of Jade.
Ndriananahary of the Razanes.
And, of course, Zeus and Thor.
Odd that Lord Horus arrives late to a meet concerning dire peril emanating from Ancient Egypt.
A delay to prepare for this summit, Master Vishnu.
Read nothing more into it.
Let us stand united, my brethren.
All present must sense the grave danger we face.
Excruciatingly so.

And that even we may not be powerful enough to stop this conqueror.
There are others that might be called upon.
They of the Forgotten Zone.
Lack of time precludes their participation.
But our knowledge of this foe is dangerously limited.
In that I may be of some assistance.

And speaking of intelligence gathering...
Akhenaten's murdered Reed Richards!
Richards was mine to kill!
That arrogant dog will pay for this effrontery!
And Akhenaten's monstrous ego may have provided me with a road map to vengeance.
At first glance it appears to be just another palace fresco.
Classical Egyptian motifs.
Abduction, death and rebirth.
But no religious myth is this, but rather alien abduction.
The fool has even given me its date and time of day.
And in so doing has gifted me with a possible path to victory.

Honorable Horus, this flame-spouting bowl..?
Its purpose?
It be the Eye of Ra!
No secret can be hidden from its gaze.
Not even one treasured by Akhenaten the Heretic.
This villain is known to you?
Aye, Hunab Ku, when human he turned his back on the old gods.
He forced his people to worship the sun god Aten.
For this blasphemy we did curse him.
That now appears a punishment gone awry.

A miscarriage we must now set right.
Through knowledge shall come justice.
Let us pray it is so.
Might Akhenaten detect this intrusion?
..et us hope not.
"For even through this medium, can you not sense his power?
"He has gone far beyond godhood...
...and now radiates the might of a prime universal force.


"Even his inner sanctuary is a blending of realities, almost beyond comprehension."
Craven Horemheb, did you actually think dying would save you from my vengeance?
I know now that you did murder my son Tutankhamun and loyal vizier Ay...
...in order to claim a throne to which you had no right.
For these crimes you must dearly pay!
Have mercy, noble Akhenaten!
Not likely, dog.

He has imprisoned a spirit from the far side of the grand veil!
A feat beyond my might.
And mine.
To him we be what mere mortals are to our kind.
But take heart, for all things under the stars have a weakness.
Akhenaten's shall be revealed to us.
And to another.
Where?
From the fresco hieroglyphs I discovered the exact hour and date of your abduction, Akhenaten.
But where were you when the Celestial Order recruited you?
Did you show mercy to my 17-year-old son, Horemheb?
No.
So expect none.
For history's grandest dynasty is born this day, but it on the bones of many whose only offense was courage and defiance.
To allow your treachery to go unpunished would be a travesty.
Say farewell to the afterlife, villain.
NO! Please!

Unbelievable!

He actually destroyed Horemheb's spirit!

I did not think such a dark feat possible...

Rest in peace, my son.

Your slaughter has been avenged.

Now I must return to the work of the Celestial Order.

To wield the limitless might given me.

Not the illusion of power I once possessed, but true power.

As king of the upper and lower Nile I was so proud.

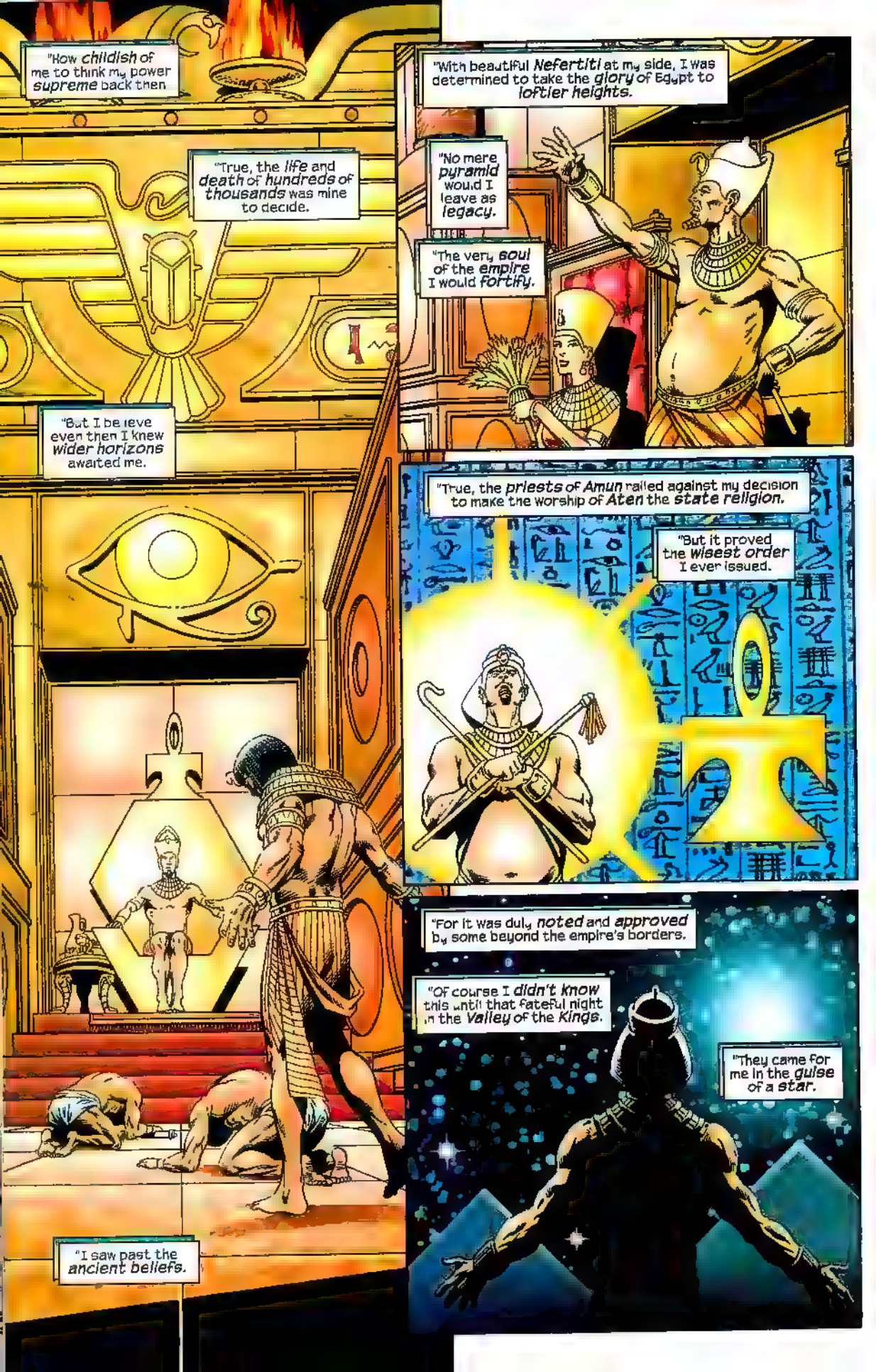
Mine was the grandest empire on earth.

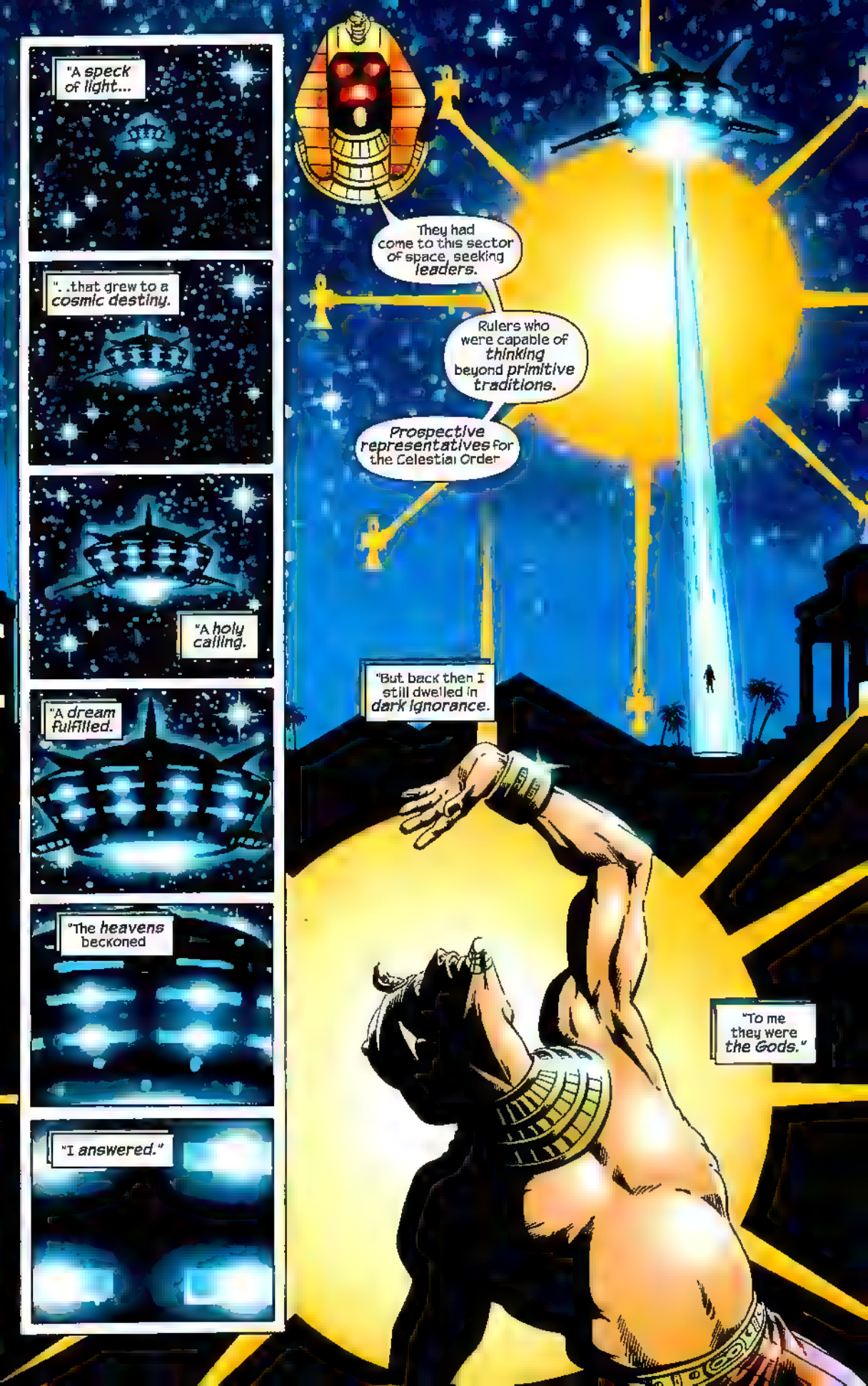
Only now do I see how insignificant it truly was.

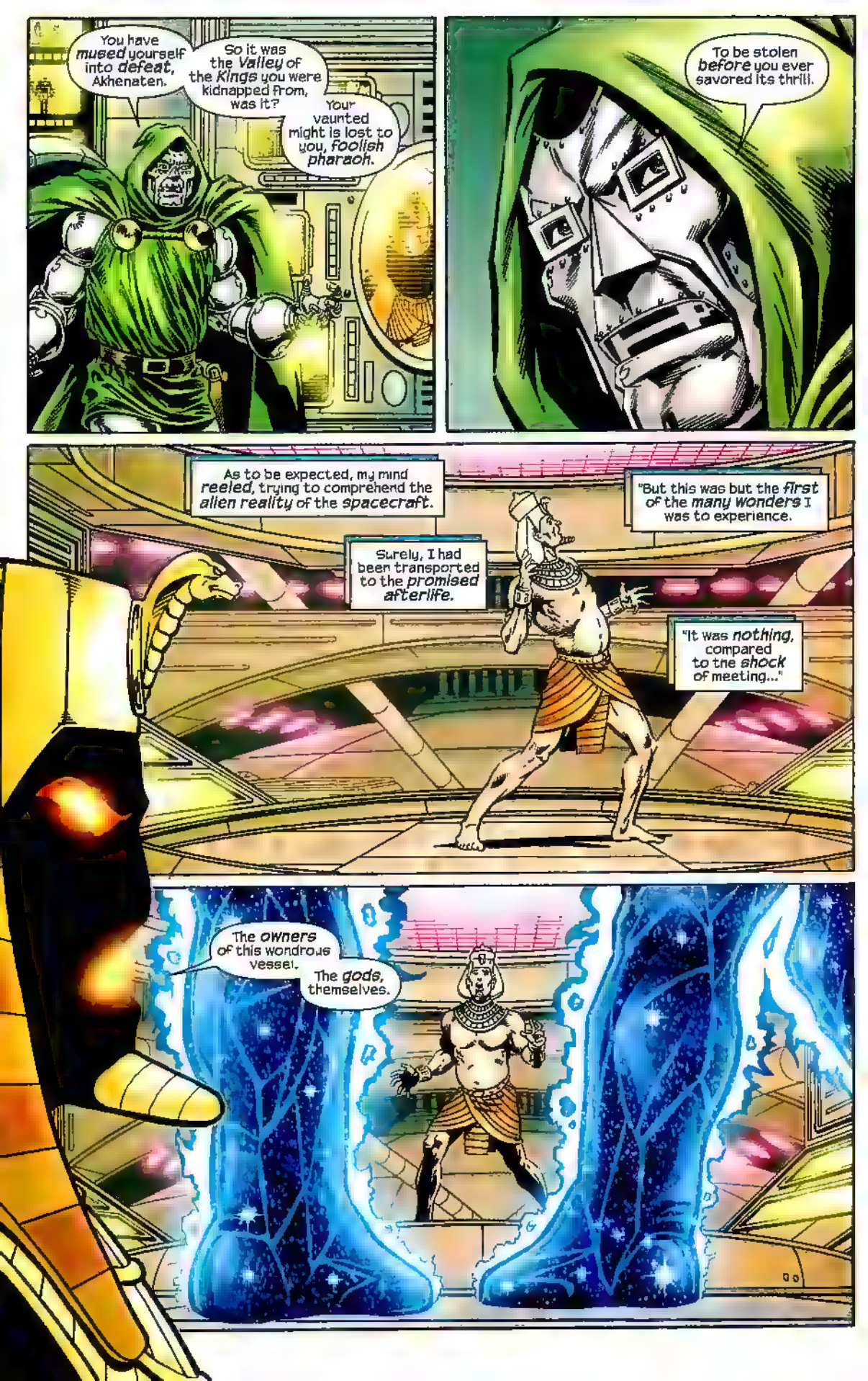
Even the grandeur of Akhetaten will be naught compared to what I shall build

A dream that took 5000 years to realize.

One I could not even imagine when I was ancient Egypt's ruler.


"How childish of me to think my power supreme back then
"True, the life and death of hundreds of thousands was mine to decide.
"But I believe even then I knew wider horizons awaited me.
"I saw past the ancient beliefs.
"With beautiful Nefertiti at my side, I was determined to take the glory of Egypt to loftier heights.
"No mere pyramid would I leave as legacy.
"The very soul of the empire I would fortify.
"True, the priests of Amun railed against my decision to make the worship of Aten the state religion.
"But it proved the wisest order I ever issued.
"For it was duly noted and approved by some beyond the empire's borders.
"Of course I didn't know this until that fateful night in the Valley of the Kings.
"They came for me in the guise of a star.


"A speck of light...
"...that grew to a cosmic destiny.
"A holy calling.
"A dream fulfilled.
"The heavens beckoned
"I answered."
They had come to this sector of space, seeking leaders.
Rulers who were capable of thinking beyond primitive traditions.
Prospective representatives for the Celestial Order
"But back then I still dwelled in dark ignorance.
"To me they were the Gods."


You have mused yourself into defeat, Akhenaten.
So it was the Valley of the Kings you were kidnapped from, was it?
Your vaunted might is lost to you, foolish pharaoh.
To be stolen before you ever savored its thrill.
As to be expected, my mind reeled, trying to comprehend the alien reality of the spacecraft.
Surely, I had been transported to the promised afterlife.
"But this was but the first of the many wonders I was to experience.
"It was nothing, compared to the shock of meeting..."
The owners of this wondrous vessel.
The gods, themselves.

I admit, it was more than my primitive mind could grasp.
As I would later learn, the Celestial Order had spent the past two centuries scouring the heavens for unique local inhabitants, such as myself.
They had discovered the ultimate power and chose to use it to press peace onto a chaotic universe.
Under their rule thousands of wars throughout the stars would come to an end.
Illness, want and injustice would become but bad memories.
To ease the transition from hell to heaven they decided each conquered space would be ruled by an enlightened local citizen.
Through time and space they searched for their chosen few.
I perfectly fit their requirements: a man accustomed to ruling with a certain ruthlessness, and vision to see beyond the now.
So when I eventually regained my wits, my eyes opened to see...
...the penultimate in the inconceivable.

"They called it the *Heart* of the *Infinite*.

"From *it* they drew their *power*.

"Power they chose to *share* with me.

"*Not* an *easy gift* to *accept*.

"For nearly *two thousand years* my mind danced with *insanity*.

"The *scope* of such *astral revelations* takes time to *digest*.

"My *term of adjustment* was quite *quick*, compared to that of other *alien representatives*.

"*Another century* passed unnoticed as I *learned* to master the *gift* the Order blessed me with.

"But even then my *access* to the *heart's might* was *restricted*...

"Until my *indoctrination* into the Celestial Order's *mysteries* and *protocols* was complete.

"It took me *two thousand years* to earn their *trust*, for something about the *human psyche* eludes their understanding.

"*Personal ambition* is a trait they only *vaguely comprehend*.

"A *flaw* I shall someday *capitalize* on.

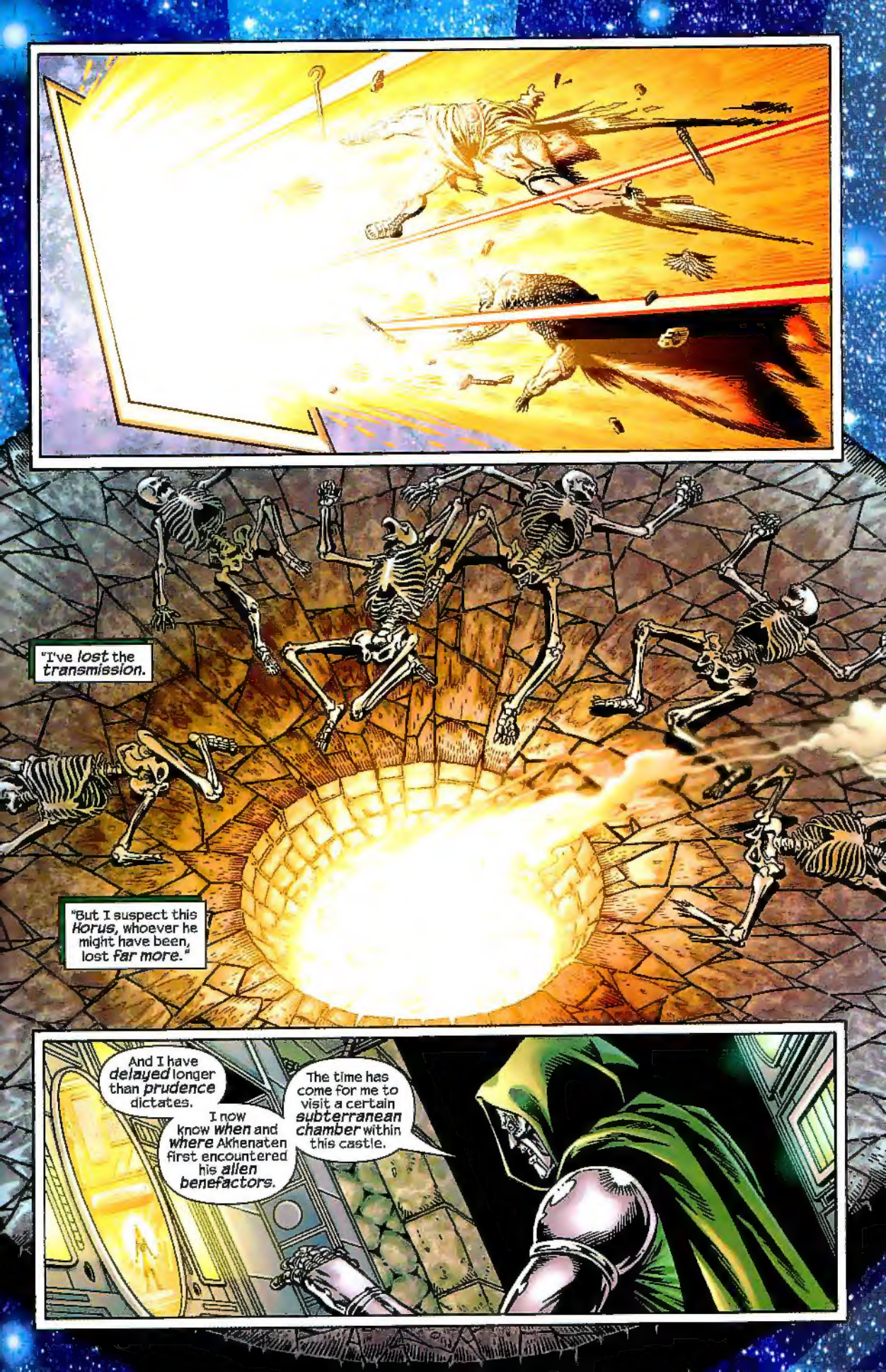
"But in the meantime I shall *act* as their *agent* and add this galaxy to the *Order's membership*.

"For with *infinite power* comes *infinite patience*.

"*My day* shall eventually be realized.

"Only *then* will all be set *right* within the universe."

And any who might stand in the way of that day?
They will be among the fallen.
For this dream supersedes any previous allegiance.
No cost is too great to pay for fulfillment.
Even gods must accept this inevitability.
Can it be?
Even you, Horus!
He knows!
ZEUS?!
ESCAPE!
Farewell, pretenders!


"I've *lost* the *transmission.*
"But I suspect this *Horus,* whoever he might have been, lost *far more.*"
And I have *delayed* longer than *prudence* dictates.
I now know *when* and *where* Akhenaten first encountered his *alien benefactors.*
The time has come for me to visit a certain *subterranean chamber* within this castle.

Akhenaten, omnipotence is about to be lost to you.
And with a bit of guile and good fortune, your treasure might yet fall into the grasp of DOCTOR DOOM!

Like myself, Doom was a man who *understood* and had a *taste* for *power*.

Considering the *limits* of his *understanding* of the *cosmic*, his was rather an *ingenious plan*.

Of course, it was destined to *failure*.

Perhaps deep in his heart Doom *realized* this, but still he *persevered*.

You have to *admire* such *grim determination*, even if it is only backed by *unrealistic optimism*.

For *no one*, at that moment, had any inkling that in *this struggle* there would be *no winner*.

TO BE CONTINUED...